Julie Nixon Says Father 'Is Not in Despair' Over Watergate

Associated Press

Julie Nixon Eisenhower said yesterday that her father is bearing up through the Watergate scandal "quite well" and is trying to concentrate on running the country.

The President's younger daughter, wife of David Esienhower, grandson of the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower, gave her account of Mr. Nixon's travail over the widening Watergate investigation during an interview with Barbara Walters on the "Today" show (NBC, WRC.)

She said she had been watching the televised hearings of the Senate Watergate committee and found them "an unfolding mystery." She added:

"There have been a lot of accusations thrown out. I think the hearings will try to clarify what has happened and will help us get to the bottom of it."

Mrs. Eisnehower said there had been no mention to her of possible impeachment of the President, but there had been family discussions of the impact his resignation would have on the country.

"I think it would be a grave mistake for him to resign," she said, adding that it might be interpreted as an admission of "wrongdoing."

Asked how the family was giving the President solace during the crisis, she said solace wasn't quite the right word.

"He is not in despair," she said. "He is taking it quite well. He has a very positive attitude. We're saying to him, 'We believe in you.' "

She said, however, that her father had "expressed frustration because his achievements at this point in the administration have been overshadowed by Watergate.

"He's not saying forget about Watergate, but is trying to move ahead, hoping that the American people can focus on other important developments as well."

Asked about the effects of Watergate on the President's demeanor, she said there had been "no dramatic change."

"He looks a little older in repose," she said, "but we might expect that. He's past 60."

Mrs. Eisenhower would not comment at all on statements by Martha Mitchell wife of former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, to the effect that Mitchell was keeping silent about Watergate to protect the President.

Asked about the President's reaction to the resignations of his two top aides. H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, she replied:

"I think we have to be careful not to prejudge anyone. I think the purpose of the trial is to see what has gone on. Let's wait."

Mrs. Eisenhower expressed herself as being "kind of sad" over the state of relations between the press and the White House and charges that White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler has done an about-face in his attitude toward questions about Watergate.

"If the press is unwilling to accept what Mr. Ziegler says," she said, "there's not much you can do about it."